

Message Text

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PAGE 01 DACCA 01963 150814Z
ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 OMB-01 AID-05 EB-08 /070 W
-----150922Z 086768 /12

R 150525Z APR 77
FM AMEMBASSY DACCA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4245
INFO AMCONSUL CALCUTTA
AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

C O N F I D E N T I A L DACCA 1963

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, BG
SUBJECT: ZIA, THE POLITICIAN?

1. ON APRIL 13, GENERAL ZIA OPENED A CONFERENCE FOR THE UNION PARISHAD CHAIRMEN ELECTED IN JANUARY, OF THOSE CHAIRMEN ELECTED IN DACCA DIVISION. HIS INAUGURAL SPEECH SEEMED TO HAVE A TWO-FOLD PURPOSE: TO INSPIRE AND TO ENCOURAGE THE NEW UP CHAIRMEN AND TO ANNOUNCE A NEW SIX-POINT PROGRAM FOR THEIR GUIDANCE. OFTEN ZIA IS A DRY, UNEMOTIONAL SPEAKER WHO STANDS RAMROD STRAIGHT BEHIND HIS PODIUM, BUT ON THIS OCCASION, DRESSED IN CAMOUFLAGE UNIFORM, HE TOOK A MICROPHONE IN HAND, LEFT THE DAIS, STOOD AMONG THE DELEGATES AND WARMED THEM UP WITH SUCH PATRIOTIC REMINDERS AS "BANGLADESH WAS THE ONLY COUNTRY IN THE SUB-CONTINENT TO HAVE WON ITS FREEDOM THROUGH A BLOODY WAR OF LIBERATION, WHICH DISTINGUISHES BANGLADESH FROM ALL THE COUNTRIES OF THE REGION." HE DECLARED THAT "BANGLADESH HAD COME TO STAY, AND IT WOULD STAY ON PROUDLY FOR ALL TIMES TO COME*"

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 DACCA 01963 150814Z

2. ZIA THEN OUTLINED A SIX-POINT PROGRAM TO GUIDE THE EFFORTS OF THE CHAIRMEN. HIS SIX POINTS INCLUDED:

--FORMING OF FOOD COMMITTEES FOR FACING THE UNCERTAIN FOOD SITUATION;
--BUILDING UP RURAL INDUSTRIES;

--BUILDING HOUSES IN THE RURAL AREAS STRONG ENOUGH
TO WITHSTAND NATURAL CALAMITIES;
--ERADICATION OF ILLITERACY;
--INSPIRING THE PEOPLE TO ACCEPT VOLUNTARILY FAMILY
PLANNING;
--INCREASING TEXTILE PRODUCTION THROUGH OPTIMUM USE
OF LOOMS AND INCREASING COTTON PRODUCTION.

3. BRIEFLY ELABORATING CERTAIN POINTS, ZIA STRESSED THAT
AGRICULTURE WOULD GET THE TOP PRIORITY AND ONLY LATER WOULD
SUCH THINGS AS SMALL AND COTTAGE INDUSTRIES, EDUCATION,
HOUSING AND HEALTH RECEIVE ATTENTION. HE DECLARED THAT THE
GOAL OF FOOD SELF-SUFFICIENCY WAS POSSIBLE: "OUR LANDS ARE
FERTILE AND OUR PEOPLE ARE HARD-WORKING -- ALL WE NEED IS
ZEALOUS LEADERSHIP AND BOLD PROGRAMS*" HE WARNED HIS
AUDIENCE THAT THE MARTIAL LAW ADMINISTRATION HAD ASSUMED
THAT THE COUNTRY WOULD EXPERIENCE FLOODS THIS YEAR.
"DO NOT GET DISHEARTENED," HE SAID, "FOR WE ARE PREPARING,
AND IN THE EVENT OF A FLOOD, YOU SHALL FIND THE BANGLADESH
ARMED FORCES FIGHTING THE FLOODS SHOULDER TO SHOULDER WITH
YOU*"

4. ZIA CONCLUDED HIS REMARKS BY EXHORTING THE
CHAIRMAN TO DEVELOP THEIR PARISHADS AS "FULLY AUTONOMOUS
ORGANIZATIONS." HE SAID THAT THE UP CHAIRMEN WERE A
BRIDGE BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT AND THE PEOPLE. HIS FINAL
PIECE OF ADVICE TO THE CHAIRMEN WAS FOR THEM TO INDULGE
OCCASIONALLY IN SELF-CRITICISM AND TO ACCOUNT FOR ALL
THEIR DEEDS TO THE PEOPLE IN A DEMOCRATIC MANNER.
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PAGE 03 DACCA 01963 150814Z

5. EDITORIALS, NOT SURPRISINGLY, HAVE PRAISED ZIA'S REMARKS.
THE BANGLADESH OBSERVER CITED HIS "LOFTY GOALS" BUT DID
CAUTION THAT ONE OF THE INHIBITING FACTORS IN THE PAST
HAD BEEN THE "PRINCIPAL-AGENCY RELATIONSHIP" BETWEEN THE
GOVERNMENT AND THE UNION PARISHADS. PERHAPS, CONCLUDED
THE OBSERVER, THIS PROBLEM CAN BE AVOIDED UNDER GENERAL ZIA.

6. COMMENT: ZIA'S SIX-POINT PROGRAM CONTAINED NO SUBSTANTIVE
DEPARTURE FROM HIS EARLIER POLICY STATEMENTS AND
EXHORTATIONS, BUT THE OCCASION AND THE STYLE OF HIS PEP
TALK MADE HIS REMARKS SEEM ALMOST LIKE THE KICK-OFF OF
A POLITICAL CAMPAIGN. IF HE SHOULD NEED A PLATFORM, HE
NOW SEEMS TO HAVE ONE HANDY.
MASTERS

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: SPEECHES, CENTRAL LEGISLATURE
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 15-Apr-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977DACCA01963
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770131-0398
Format: TEL
From: DACCA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770454/aaaabunq.tel
Line Count: 112
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 9bf598a4-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 18-Nov-2004 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2798033
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: ZIA, THE POLITICIAN?
TAGS: PINT, BG, (RAHMAN, ZIAUR)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/9bf598a4-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009